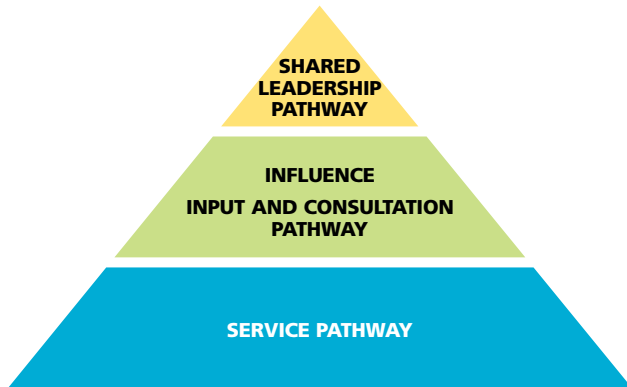


## Hampton's Model of Youth Civic Engagement



Three key pathways create a system that increases a community's social capital. This approach — investing in youth — offers countless benefits. It taps their energy and ideas, creates a youth focus in public decision-making, ensures more inclusive results, trains them for increasingly responsible and meaningful positions, creates productive citizens and cultivates pro-social attitudes in the next generation of taxpayers and policy-makers. Most important, it builds a better community.

For more information, contact:

### Hampton Coalition for Youth

City Hall • 22 Lincoln St • Hampton, VA 23669  
757-728-3280 • [www.hampton.gov/foryouth](http://www.hampton.gov/foryouth)

To obtain additional pamphlets in this series covering more specific topics of Youth Civic Engagement and Creating a Youth-Friendly City, email [foryouth@hampton.gov](mailto:foryouth@hampton.gov).



**Hampton's Youth Civic Engagement is a 2005 winner of the Innovations in American Government Award.**

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# Youth as Planners, Youth Share Leadership



Photography by Lisa M. Zunzanyika  
Additional photos courtesy of Alternatives, Inc. and City of Hampton

**YOUNG VOICES, NEW VISIONS:**  
**The Power of Youth  
to Improve Communities**

**A series based on Hampton, Virginia's  
model of Youth Civic Engagement**

# Youth as Planners, Youth Share Leadership

**H**ampton, Virginia gives young people a voice; and the city even offers them a paycheck. Since 1996, the Planning Department has hired two teens as 15 hour-a-week city planners. Their work is considered essential to identifying and meeting the needs of youth stakeholders as they help shape policy, explore public opinion, lead focus groups, research projects, tackle issues, and author strategic planning documents.

## SOME YOUTH PLANNER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Collected input from hundreds of teens to determine critical issues
- Authored their own strategic issues section (a first in the country) as an official Youth Component in the city's comprehensive Community Plan
- Created policies around transportation to accommodate youth needs
- Recommended solutions regarding land use, park design, neighborhood plans, and school investments
- Created a youth-generated database of youth-friendly places, businesses and organizations
- Designed and negotiated for a \$2.5 million multi-purpose teen facility



## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

- A departmental climate that treats young people as professional staff, while recognizing their unique youth perspective
- A local government with a champion for youth involvement and a culture that encourages innovation and risk taking
- Resources reallocated (staff, time, finances) to support the Youth Planners with as much attention as any other department program
- Adults and young people trained and willing to work in partnership
- Youth Planners connected to a Youth Council/ Commission that becomes their sounding board and work partners
- Teens selected who are passionate about youth issues, but not so busy they can't be committed
- Staggered hiring so that the senior Planner can always mentor the junior

**See also:** Youth With Influence —  
[http://www.colorado.edu/journals/cye/15\\_2/index.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/journals/cye/15_2/index.htm)